Israeli Politics  
(POLS 149)  
Fall 2014  
Syllabus

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Office: 3715 Ellison Hall  
Office Hours: M 3:30–4:45 p.m., W 12:45-1:30 p.m., or by appointment  
Class Meeting Time: M W 2:00–3:15 p.m.  
Class Meeting Place: Girvetz 1115  
Class Website: On GauchoSpace

1 Objectives

This class both introduces students to the politics of Israel and explores the ways in which the study of Israel can contribute to important contemporary debates. The first half of the class maps the contours of Israeli domestic politics: the conflicts within Israeli society, the functioning of Israel’s political institutions, the identity of its key political actors, and the features of its public policy. The second half of the class explicitly places Israel in comparative perspective. Israel’s experiences can illuminate many ongoing debates in the United States and other democracies, such as that about how religion and politics should relate. Israel also serves as a critical case for several bodies of theory in comparative politics, such as the literature seeking to explain the rise of religious fundamentalism. What this class is not is a class solely devoted either to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or to the history and politics of Israel. With respect to the latter, it is a comparative politics class, which aims to generalize beyond the Israeli case; with respect to the former, while one cannot study Israeli politics without encountering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neither can one solely reduce Israeli politics to it.

2 Class and Contact Information

The syllabus, paper guidelines, study guides, and other handouts are all available from the class GauchoSpace site. Announcements will be posted to the website; it should be your first port of call if you’re unsure about what’s happening when and where. You have two ways to contact me:

- **Office Hours:** I encourage you to stop by early in the quarter so that you can get to know me and vice versa. Don’t, in other words, feel shy about coming to see me, whether you just want to chat about the weather or have more substantive class-related issues to discuss.

- **E-mail:** I will generally respond within twenty-four hours to e-mails that I receive Mondays through Fridays. Often my response will come in far less than twenty-four hours, but I do not guarantee it. Note that I rarely check e-mail in the evenings. E-mails that I receive over the weekend will be answered on Monday. I will notify you of any planned deviations from this pledge, such as occasions when I am out of town and hence away from my e-mail.

I will also usually arrive a few minutes early to class, so you can catch me then.
3 Prerequisites

One formal prerequisite exists for the class: Political Science 6 (Introduction to Comparative Politics). A background in the history and politics of the Middle East, such as that obtained from Political Science 150A (Politics of the Middle East), is helpful but not required. The class also assumes a willingness to engage in discussion about difficult issues with appropriate respect for others’ opinions.

4 Initial Attendance and Waitlist

Students who do not attend the first two class meetings may be dropped from the course. Information regarding the waitlist will be given out at the first class meeting, so those who would like to crash should attend the first class. If you decide not to take the class, please drop as soon as possible to make room for others on the waitlist.

5 Requirements

There are four written assignments. First, the in-class midterm will assess your basic knowledge of Israeli politics, the material from the first half of the course. It will consist of identifications and short answers. Second, the take-home final, which will have an essay format, will emphasize critical thinking skills and the material from the second half of the course. Third and fourth, you will write an approximately three to four page response paper (standard font and double-spaced) to two of the three topical sets of readings from the second half of the course. In other words, you will write two response papers. These short papers are designed to spur discussion. They should both demonstrate that you have done the readings and offer some kind of critical response to them. Guidelines will be made available from the class GauchoSpace site.

The other requirement is participation. The class will operate somewhere between a lecture and a seminar format, although closer to the former for the first half of the quarter. Thoughts about the course’s subject matter and its application to other contexts (such as current political events in the U.S.) are welcome throughout. Substantial time will be devoted to discussion in the second half of the course. I expect you to play an active role in these discussions, particularly for the topics for which you write a response paper. I also encourage you to stay abreast of current events, which we will periodically discuss. Accordingly, participation—comprised of contribution to class discussions and the response papers—constitutes a non-trivial portion of the grade. Note that earning a good participation grade will require you to be a regular attendee of the class: while I will not take formal role, I will be aware of your general attendance (or lack thereof).

6 Grading

Grades for the course will be calculated as follows.

- An in-class midterm examination on 12 November (tentative date). (30%) No make-ups will be scheduled for the midterm; if you have an excused absence due to a documented medical or family emergency, the final examination will count for 70% of your grade.
• Class participation, including response papers. (30%) Response papers are due in hard copy at the beginning of the second class devoted to the topic: tentatively, on 19 November for Topic A (Democracy, Citizenship and Nation); on 1 December for Topic B (Religion and Politics); and on 8 December for Topic C (Fundamentalism). The response papers and in-class participation will be weighed roughly equally in determining the participation grade (so 15% for the two response papers and 15% for in-class participation).

• A take-home final examination handed out in lecture on the third to last day of class, 3 December, and due by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 17 December, in my mailbox. (40%) Response papers will be graded according to the following three category scale: “check plus,” exceeds expectations (roughly equivalent to an ‘A’); “check,” satisfies expectations (roughly equivalent to a ‘B’); “check minus,” falls short of expectations but is minimally satisfactory (roughly equivalent to a ‘C’); and ‘F’, either not acceptable or not received. Exams will receive letter grades.

In this class, you earn your grades. If you do an excellent job on all assignments and exams, you will earn an ‘A’ for the course; if you do not, I will assign you an appropriate grade that reflects both your mastery of the material and your efforts.

Note that there are usually several speakers and events over the course of the quarter that touch upon topics related to the class. You may earn extra credit by attending and writing a brief (circa one page) response. Information about these extra credit opportunities will be both announced in class and posted on the class GauchoSpace site.

7 Late Policy

The late policy for this course is designed to avoid punishing students whose work is handed in on time. It is: late response papers will be penalized one category for up to each twenty-four hour period late (e.g., from a “check plus” to a “check”) for a maximum of two days, after which they will not be accepted and you will receive an ‘F’. However, late penalties will not drop grades below minimal passing (a “check minus”). However, no late take-home final exams will be accepted. Exceptions to this policy will be made only for documented cases of medical or family emergencies. Advance arrangements to hand in assignments late may made on an individual basis with me, at my discretion, at least a week in advance of the official due date and time. Note that you may always hand in work early!

8 Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

UCSB defines plagiarism as “the use of another’s idea or words without proper attribution or credit” (see “Academic Integrity at UCSB: A Student’s Guide”, available at http://judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx). It is a serious academic offense. For this course, while you may discuss your response papers with other people, the write-ups must be your own. However, do not discuss your take-home final exam with others; you must write it on your own, and it should be your own, original work. Plagiarism and other types of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Student Judicial Affairs Office for disciplinary action and will result in an automatic failing grade for that assignment. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, ask me! Also ask me for help if you are struggling before you resort to such desperate measures.
9 Required Reading Materials

There is a required textbook:


It may be purchased either from the bookstore or from online stores; for those who would like to save some money, it is also available from the library’s Reserve Book Service (after about 7 October).

All other required readings on the syllabus are available from the course GauchoSpace site. These other readings include many short current event articles (usually at least five per week) and serve as the text for the second half of the course. I have deliberately selected readings that make strong arguments for the final three topics. At the same time, I have tried to ensure that they either individually or jointly present competing perspectives. The idea is to familiarize you with ongoing debates and hopefully for you to formulate your own informed opinions about them. In other words, you’re not expected to agree with everything!

10 Schedule and Readings (Dates Tentative)

Introduction (6 Oct)


PART I: SETTING THE STAGE: POLITICS IN ISRAEL

A Whirlwind Tour Through History (8 and 13 Oct)
Mahler, Chapter 1, p. 13–45. Also skim Chapter 9, p. 208–225 only, and Chapter 11, p. 269–301.


Cleavages in Israeli Society (15 and 20 Oct)
Mahler, Chapter 2, p. 47–71, and Chapter 3, p. 73–81 and 85–88 only.


**Political Institutions (22 and 27 Oct)**

Mahler, Chapter 4, p. 97–116; Chapter 5, p. 117–131 only; Chapter 7, p. 171–175 only, Chapter 8, p. 185–200 only, and Chapter 10, p. 244–249 only.


**Representation & Government (29 Oct and 3 Nov)**

Mahler, Chapter 5, p. 131–139 only; Chapter 6, p. 141–158; and Chapter 7, p. 175–183 only.


**Public Policy: Domestic and Foreign (5 and 10 Nov)**

Mahler, Chapter 3, p. 81–84 and 88–93 only, and Chapter 9, p. 225–236 only.


*Note: Midterm exam on 12 November.*
PART II: ISRAEL IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Topic A: Liberal vs. Ethnic Conceptions of Democracy, Citizenship, and Nation (17, 19 and 24 November)


Topic B: Religion and Politics, Church and State (26 Nov, 1 and 3 Dec)


Whitman, Lawrence. N.d. “Church and State: Why are America and France so Different?,” p. 1–15 only. Unpublished manuscript.


Topic C: Religious Fundamentalism and the Occupied Territories (3, 8 and 10 Dec)

Mahler, Chapter 10, p. 257–265 only.


